



Clean Energy Future Committee Meeting Minutes

Approved at the 03-26-2021 meeting

February 26, 2021

8:00 – 9:30 a.m.

Virtual Meeting – Hosted on Zoom

Members present: Jim DiTullio, Ken Pruitt, Dave Levy, Emily Sullivan, Dan Amstutz, Pasi Miettinen (arrived at 8:35 and left at 9:00), Ryan Katofsky, Nellie Akenhead, Marc Breslow, Adam Chapdelaine, Dianne Mahon

Members not present: Shelly Dein, Coralie Cooper

The meeting convened at 8:05 a.m.

Video Meeting Procedures

Mr. Pruitt read a set of prepared remarks explaining the procedures that the Committee would follow to hold a virtual meeting. Governor Baker signed an Executive Order in response to the COVID-19 pandemic allowing virtual meetings, which suspended the usual Open Meeting Law requirement that a quorum of committee members be physically present in order to hold an official committee meeting.

Meeting Minutes

Mr. Pruitt displayed the Minutes from the January 22, 2021 Meeting. Mr. Pruitt asked the Committee to review the Minutes. Mr. Katofsky motioned to approve the Minutes as presented. Mr. Chapdelaine seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. The Committee unanimously approved the January 22, 2021 Meeting Minutes.

Agenda Item 1: Review of the Net Zero Action Plan

Mr. Pruitt discussed the Net Zero Action Plan, noting that the Plan presented to the Committee at present was inclusive of all previous changes submitted by Committee members. Mr. Pruitt noted Mr. Amstutz suggested several very minor changes that Mr. Pruitt would incorporate before the plan is finalized and made available to the public. Mr. Pruitt then opened the floor for other comments, edits, and other discussion.

Mr. Breslow commented that he was uncomfortable with a statement in the "Letter from the Future" about three future Massachusetts Governors having come from Arlington. Mr. Pruitt noted that another reviewer had raised the same concern, which he had addressed by reducing the number to two in the revised version, as suggested by the other reviewer.

Mr. Katofsky commented on the Appendix A implementation tables in the back of the Plan. He asked whether the implementation timeline should be focused on the time needed to “stand up” the measure / initiative vs. how long the measure would stay active, which in some cases will be many years. Mr. Pruitt noted he collaborated with MAPC on creating Appendix A, including this term. He said the meaning of ‘implementation’ in this context was to encapsulate both the standing up and long-term operation of the measure – in other words, the full lifetime of the measure. Mr. Pruitt noted that Mr. Katofsky had asked this question in written form earlier, pointing out that the implementation timelines were not consistent regardless of which definition one used. Mr. Pruitt said he had reviewed the Appendix A tables and made changes to ensure all timelines were now consistent with the chosen definition.

Mr. Pruitt asked for additional comments. There were none. Mr. Pruitt asked for approval of the Plan as drafted. Ms. Mahon motioned for approval. Mr. Katofsky seconded the motion.

Ms. Mahon then observed that at a recent Long Range Planning Committee meeting, there was a discussion of a possible \$18 million override vote in 2023 or 2024. She cautioned that the tight fiscal situation might make it difficult to implement the Net Zero Plan. She asked if this Committee could look to find ways to bring in revenue outside the general budget to help implement the Plan. Mr. Pruitt noted that many of the measures in the Plan can probably be implemented without additional cost to the Town using existing staff; for example, three Department of Planning and Community Development staff serve on this Committee. Mr. Pruitt noted that other measures could be implemented with a combination of existing Town staff, Committee volunteers, and additional resident volunteers. He said that some measures would indeed likely require additional funding, but that the Town would seek grant support wherever possible and only request Town funding where necessary.

Mr. Katofsky noted that some measures in the proposed Net Zero Action Plan would increase energy efficiency and thereby decrease energy costs for the average household, so that investments in implementing the Plan could actually save residents money overall.

Mr. Pruitt asked for any further discussion. None was offered. A roll call was taken. The Committee unanimously voted to approve the Net Zero Action Plan as proposed.

[Pasi Miettinen joined the meeting at about this time]

The Committee members then thanked Mr. Pruitt for all his hard work on this effort.

Mr. Katofsky asked what was next in terms of Town approval of the Plan. Mr. Pruitt said he still needed to make some minor formatting changes, especially to Appendix A. After that, the Plan would be made available on the Clean Energy Future Committee’s web page and announced via social media. He said the Plan would be presented to the Select Board for endorsement in March or April and would also be presented to Town Meeting. Mr. Chapdelaine agreed with the timeline expressed by Mr. Pruitt. Ms. Mahon

noted that recent Select Board meetings had been too lengthy and asked for an estimate of time for any presentation to the Select Board to ensure it was budgeted sufficient time. After some discussion Ms. Mahon suggested a 15-20 presentation was appropriate. Mr. Chapdelaine suggested the presentation should be delayed until late April after the Board worked through all proposed Town Meeting warrant articles.

Agenda Item 2: Declaration of Climate Emergency

Mr. Pruitt then asked Mr. Parke Wilde for a short presentation on his and his colleagues' warrant article asking Town Meeting to declare a Climate Emergency.

Mr. Wilde previewed the warrant article submission made to the Select Board for its consideration and, he hopes, support. Mr. Wilde noted other Towns have made such declarations.

Mr. Wilde discussed the five provisions of the proposed warrant article: that the Town of Arlington speak plainly about the climate crisis, report on progress in fossil fuels reduction, act to reduce unnecessary fossil fuels use (in matters within Town authority), speak up for climate-friendly policies (in matters outside of Town authority), and work for climate justice. He stated that his group has consulted with Town Attorney Doug Heim about the language and received helpful input.

Mr. Wilde concluded by expressing his hope that the Committee finds the declaration useful for its efforts to guide the Town to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Mr. Pruitt highlighted some points from Mr. Wilde's presentation to ensure the Committee is clear about the practical implications of the warrant article. He said he thought the first provision, that the Town speak plainly about the climate crisis, was straightforward and should be non-controversial. He noted that the second tenet, which includes a call to update the greenhouse gas inventory regularly, is something the Town was already planning to do and could do without additional resources. Mr. Pruitt suggested the third tenet may require more changes in Town operations, as it calls for ensuring the Town considers climate change in every area within the Town's control.

Ms. Mahon asked about the overlap with schools and wondered if schools needed to be mentioned in the declaration more explicitly, including potentially climate education. Mr. Wilde agreed with the comment but also noted it was important that adults "walk the walk" for the benefit of those in the school system.

Mr. Pruitt then turned to provision four, which he observed is something the Net Zero Plan currently endorses, which is the lobbying and organizing with other groups outside of Arlington to influence state legislation and multi-municipality campaigns.

Mr. Pruitt finally noted that item five, which calls for climate justice, was something called for in the Net Zero Plan as well.

Ms. Mahon asked if Mr. Pruitt and Mr. Chapdelaine could have a subsequent conversation with Mr. Wilde about adding schools into provision three of the proposed Warrant Article. Mr. Wilde agreed that schools should be included in this effort.

Mr. Wilde then noted the warrant article is ultimately an expression by Town Meeting about the goals of the Town.

Mr. Amstutz commented that the Town should consider the real-world implications of the proposed warrant article as it considers whether to adopt it.

[Pasi Miettinen left the meeting around this time]

Ms. Gina Sonder, a Town resident and part of the group advocating for the Declaration, said that she would be amenable to making schools more inclusive in the warrant article but also noted in previous conversations that the group wanted to stay away from the curriculum aspect when thinking about schools.

Mr. Katofsky stated that he was open to supporting this proposed warrant article. He said his only concern was that he did not want this proposed warrant article to be seen as duplicative or conflicting with the Net Zero Action Plan or the proposed warrant article to amend the Zoning Bylaw to remove barriers to net zero buildings on non-conforming lots, which was sponsored by the Clean Energy Future Committee.

Mr. Pruitt asked for a motion to endorse the Plan. Ms. Mahon motioned and Mr. Levy seconded the motion.

Mr. Katofsky asked a question about the timeline for implementation envisioned by the advocates for the Declaration of Climate Emergency, and asked whether that timeline might conflict with the Net Zero Action Plan's 2050 target. Mr. Wilde noted that his group supports the timeline in the Net Zero Action Plan.

A vote was taken. The Committee unanimously voted to endorse the proposed warrant articles with the words "and schools" added to the language.

Ms. Mahon asked if the next Committee meeting start time could be moved to 8:15 or 8:30. Mr. Pruitt asked for feedback and after some discussion it was agreed to start future meetings at 8:15 a.m.

Ms. Mahon motioned to adjourn the meeting, and Mr. Levy seconded. The Committee voted unanimously to adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 9:16 a.m.

Submitted by Dave Levy.